

Kuslat, Bosnia-Herzegovina

U.S., Serb Soldiers Repair Bridge

U.S. engineers and Bosnian-Serb soldiers joined forces in May to rebuild two bridges over the Drina River, near the city of Kuslat. Participating soldiers were drawn from the Georgia Army National Guard's 648th Engineer Battalion and the Bosnian Serb forces' 55th Reconnaissance Detachment, a special-forces unit.

"This mission was significant because for the first time we were working side by side with Bosnian-Serb soldiers," said 2LT David Henderson, leader of 1st Platoon, Company C, the unit charged with making the repairs.

Despite the differences in language and background, the U.S. and Serb units came together as a team, although the

soldiers often communicated using hand signals and gestures when interpreters were busy, Henderson said.

The repairs were necessary because "there were some big holes in surfaces, and civilians took chances every time they drove across the bridges," Henderson said. "You could easily get stuck or damage a vehicle trying it."

The soldiers stripped wooden planking from the bridges' steel frames, then "redecked" the structures with new wooden planks and treadways that run the length of each bridge to reduce wear and tear on the surface, Henderson said.

The new bridges are now stable and meet their maximum capacity requirements of 30 tons, said SGT John D. Barnard Jr., a heavy-equipment operator.

"A lot of people are trying to

move back into this area; these bridges give the civilians their freedom of movement and should aid citizens coming back to their homes," Henderson said.

"You have a lot of people who would like to return," he said. "Having the Stabilization Force come out here to build bridges shows the citizens we are here to support them." — *SPC Anthony Jarmusz, Michigan Army National Guard*

Honduras

Bringing Help to Honduras

THERE was no pushing or shoving in the village of Guanajulque as the people lined up to receive medical attention. Many wearing their best clothes, they waited patiently in the hot sun.

As Maria Mendez and her

three children stepped up to the triage station, SSG Kirk Vanian asked what was wrong and SSG Norm Medina translated his question.

"My head hurts, and I have pain in my back," she answered.

Pain is often a part of life for the residents of these poor mountain villages, but the soldiers from the Colorado Army National Guard's Company C, 109th Area Support Medical Battalion, were in Honduras to try to change that. They were participating in a medical readiness exercise, or MEDRETE, in support of Joint Task Force-Bravo.

"The mission for this annual training is to provide basic medical care and preventive-medicine classes," said MAJ Dana Capozzella, commander of the team in Guanajulque.

The preventative-medicine classes, taught by members of the Honduran Health Department, addressed such fundamentals as proper toothbrushing and the importance of hand washing.

The National Guard's contribution was a portable facility and medical personnel to run a triage station, wound-care area,



Engineers of the Georgia Army National Guard's 648th Engineer Battalion work with Bosnian-Serb troops to redeck a bridge over the Drina River near Kuslat.



MAJ Dana Capozzella of the 109th ASMB briefs Colorado Army National Guard commander BG Ron Crowder during his visit to the medical readiness exercise in Honduras.

treatment room and pharmacy. In the triage area, medics examined the villagers to determine their ailments, and either treated them immediately or sent patients to a doctor or dentist.

"One of the common illnesses we see are upper-respiratory problems, which can usually be treated by the medics during triage," said Dr. (COL) Tony Korvas.

"But in addition to providing basic medical care for infections and providing prenatal services, we're trying to identify problems that, if left untreated, would become life-threatening," he explained. "These patients are referred to the Honduran doctors for further treatment."

Soldiers had many different reactions to their Honduran experience.

"I'm excited about being here," said PVT Shannon Towner. "This is my first time outside the United States; I've

been in the Guard for less than a year, and it's the first chance I've had to use the medical skills I learned in AIT," she said.

But others were sorry they could not do more.

"Once the bag of pills is gone, they have no other help," said SGT Ashli Jones.

The unit treated more than 4,200 patients and performed more than 8,000 procedures during the two-week AT. But as the soldiers returned to Colorado, they were already looking forward to their next MEDRETE, a spring 2002 deployment to Nicaragua. — *SSG Steve Segin, Colorado Army National Guard*

Camp Doha, Kuwait

Medevac Saves Lives in the Desert

WHEN a call is received, each soldier's knowledge and preparedness are key in accomplishing the 571st Medical Company's medical-evacuation mission. The unit, from Fort Carson, Colo., has a handful of soldiers deployed here through the end of the summer.

"We have 10 people, and they are all mission-essential," said CPT Edward F. Mandril, a pilot and the company's commander. "They have a heavy load on them."

The soldiers form two teams; each consists of a flight-operations specialist and a crew that includes two pilots, a flight medic and crew chief.

The "heavy load" is their medevac mission — to provide stabilization and expeditious transport of soldiers in immediate need of medical at-

tention. The 571st serves personnel from all military branches in Kuwait, including foreign military service members.

Each crew is on alert for 48 hours at a time, ready to respond to medical emergencies and transport patients to treatment facilities. From the time a flight operations specialist receives a call, the crew must be in the air within 10 minutes.

Pilots have the easiest job, said CW3 Dennis Fletcher. "All we have to do is fly fast. The real mission comes down to the crew chief and the medic," he said.

Ensuring that helicopters are always ready to go, despite the harsh conditions, is a challenge for the crew chiefs, Mandril said.

"We're in a really sandy environment," he said. "This is an area where maintenance is a big issue."

On board each UH-60 Black Hawk, which can be configured to evacuate up to six casualties, is all the equipment

the flight medic needs to stabilize patients — from simple splints and bandages to medications and such high-tech equipment as defibrillators and oxygen ventilators.

"We're pretty much prepared to handle anything short of surgery," said flight medic SGT Phillip Smith.

When not flying missions, the company conducts training or prepares for the next emergency.

Training outside the unit includes working with field medics, who must learn how to work safely in and around helicopters, and supporting ground units training in the region, which makes those soldiers more aware of the medevac teams' presence.

"Unless they see us in action, a lot of people don't know we have all that medical equipment on board," said Mandril. "It gives units the confidence that if somebody gets hurt, we'll be there." — *SPC Carrie Fotovich*



SGT Ronald Belcher (far right) of Fort Carson's 571st Med. Co. looks on as medics unload a "patient" during medevac training at Camp Doha.

SSG Michael Rautio